

WASHINGTON

19 SEP 1974

The CIA's Chilean Connection

In the best of all possible worlds, nations would not intervene in the domestic affairs of other nations. Unfortunately, we do not live in such a world, our ancestors did not and it is highly unlikely that our descendants will.

Indeed, in the interdependent world in which we live the distinction between domestic affairs and foreign policy is blurred. And it can be argued that there is no such thing as non-intervention, since the failure to intervene is itself a form of intervention with its own probable consequences.

Intervention has two faces, positive and negative. Did we not intervene in the domestic affairs of India, to the detriment of the opposition parties, when we poured billions of dollars worth of aid into the governments controlled by the ruling Congress Party? Is not West Germany intervening in the domestic affairs of Italy by granting a \$2-billion loan that is perhaps the last chance of preserving democracy in Italy?

In the Chilean affair, there has been a leak of secret testimony from CIA Director William Colby to the effect that the agency poured \$11 million into Chile to prevent the election of Marxist

President Salvador Allende and to "destabilize" his government after he became president.

One does not have to approve of the military regime that seized power in Santiago last year — and we do not — to recognize that Allende was a friend neither of this country nor of democracy. Nor has much been said by Harrington or other foes of the CIA about the arms and money Cuba was pouring into Chile with the apparent intention of ultimately subverting that country's democratic institutions.

Nor was there any obligation on the United States to provide a regime inimical to its interests with soft loans from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank. The fall of the Allende government was due as much to its narrow political base, incompetence and excesses as to any covert American political action taken against it.

This does not mean that the procedures for congressional oversight of the CIA do not require overhauling and strengthening. It does not mean that agency officials have a right to lie to or mislead congressional committees, although the leaking of secret

testimony by congressmen can only encourage such officials to be something less than candid.

But we have to recognize that we live in a tough neighborhood and that the gang down the street is not exactly squeamish in the means it uses to attain its ends and to frustrate ours.

The present regime in Chile is an authoritarian one. But it is not totalitarian in the sense that Castro's Cuba is: the possibility and the means of a return to democracy still exists in Chile. Had Allende and his foreign backers had their way, that option might have been foreclosed. Over the long term, that \$11 million may turn out to have been a good investment, not for the copper companies or even for the United States but for the Chilean people and the cause of democracy.

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